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ABSTRACT

This brochure provides college preparation suggestions for students with visual impairments in junior and senior high school. Each section includes a checklist of activities to be accomplished during a given grade in preparation for college. The 11th grade and 12th grade sections have a month-to-month guide. Recommended activities include: exploring different careers; participating in extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations; taking a part-time or summer job or performing volunteer work; planning on how to pay for college; learning how to use different communication aids; discussing options with school guidance counselors, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and others; contacting colleges to learn about available student support services; taking standardized admission tests; and applying for admission. The guide also discusses the problems students with visual impairments face when attending colleges, including: (1) managing their time; (2) accessing written materials; (3) having enough money; (4) handling difficult classes; and (5) arranging for transportation. Also listed are suggestions offered by college students with visual impairments, focusing on: preregistering for classes; communicating with professors; locating transportation; ordering textbooks early; and making housing arrangements. A list of relevant resource organizations and materials is provided. (CR)

ED 399 711

# Activity Calendar For

# STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

EC305092

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# Preparing for COLLEGE

Students who are blind or severely visually impaired, as well as those who are sighted, share similar concerns when attending college for the first time. They must register for class, find their way around a strange campus, meet new people and make new friends, adjust to a newfound freedom, and adequately prepare to pass their courses. Students who are severely visually impaired share all these concerns and a few more which are unique to their situation. How will they arrange to complete reading assignments—find and hire readers, locate adaptive equipment for their needs, and find enough time to complete all those reading assignments? How will they find their way around campus when everyone else is just as lost as they are that first week? How will they deal with these and other issues that someone else may have been doing for them all of their lives? What support systems will they have when they leave home, possibly for the first time?

The Transition Activity Calendar lists tasks which students with severe visual impairments must complete in order to be ready to attend college. College will still be demanding, but a student who has completed the tasks outlined in the Transition Activity Calendar will be prepared to meet the challenges of college life.

## Junior High SCHOOL

- ☐ Think about possible careers, assess your skills and abilities, and think about what you would like to do in your life.
- ☐ Discuss your interests and capabilities with a special education teacher, school guidance counselor, or another trusted teacher.
- ☐ Participate in vocational assessment activities.
- ☐ Read books, attend career fairs, and talk with people in your community about their careers and educational training.
- ☐ Create and regularly contribute to a college savings fund. Even if vocational rehabilitation services provide funding for college tuition, you may have to pay for other resources, such as computers.

## Ninth GRADE

- ☐ Seek out career exploration resources, including books, tapes, and catalogs, in the school library, the guidance counselor's office, and the special education teacher's office.
- ☐ Discuss possible occupations with your special education teacher, guidance counselor, and parents or guardians. Talk with other people about their jobs and educational training.
- ☐ Participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations.

- [ ] Take a part-time or summer job or perform volunteer work.
- [ ] Regularly contribute to a college savings fund.
- [ ] Create a personal four-year plan of study to include preparatory classes for college. Review the plan with your guidance counselor and special education teacher.
- [ ] Remind your guidance counselor to order standardized achievement tests in an accessible format. Be aware that some colleges will not accept test results from nonstandardized testing conditions.
- [ ] Contact a vocational rehabilitation counselor and determine the agency's eligibility requirements. Let them know that you will be a future client who plans to attend college.
- [ ] Include career exploration activities and broad vocational goals in your annual individualized educational plan (IEP). Also emphasize the use of cassette tapes for study, even if you normally use large print.
- [ ] Obtain a public library card, apply for services from your state library for the blind and physically handicapped, such as a 4-track cassette player, and register with Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic.
- [ ] Enroll in a high school class and try using cassette tapes instead of large print or Braille books. Many college textbooks will only be accessible by tape.
- [ ] If you are interested in a math or science career, learn the Nemeth code. The Hadley School for the Blind teaches this.
- [ ] Enroll in a summer enrichment program through vocational rehabilitation that will teach you skills you will need in college, such as Braille, Nemeth code, typing, word processing, computers, orientation and mobility (O&M), study skills, note-taking skills, report writing, time management, and organizational skills.

## Tenth GRADE

- [ ] Investigate possible careers by talking with people with visual impairments who are employed in those fields. Ask them about their education, training, and career preparation. Vocational rehabilitation services, the American Council of the Blind, the American Foundation for the Blind, and the National Federation of the Blind can provide employment contacts.
- [ ] Continue to consult guidance counselors, teachers (including special education teachers), recent graduates, parents or guardians, adults, classmates, and college admissions officers about possible careers and educational programs.
- [ ] Take a part-time or summer job or perform volunteer work.
- [ ] Participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations.
- [ ] Regularly contribute to a college savings fund.
- [ ] Contact HEATH and obtain information about selecting the right college for a student with a disability.
- [ ] Develop a tentative list of colleges to investigate. Obtain catalogs from college admissions offices, and contact the colleges' student support services offices.
- [ ] Reevaluate and adjust your high school course of study as needed. Outline your curriculum schedule to meet the highest standards of any school being considered. Continue to study hard.
- [ ] Complete an interest inventory, a prevocational evaluation, and an independent living evaluation. Review the results with a guidance counselor, a special education teacher, another teacher, or a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

- [ ] Complete standardized achievement tests and review the results with teachers and guidance counselors. If needed, arrange for tutoring.
- [ ] Contact the Social Security Office and determine your eligibility for services. Apply for a Social Security number if you have not already done so. Memorize this number.
- [ ] Apply for a photo identification card from a state agency—usually the Department of Motor Vehicles—or other agencies serving people with disabilities.
- [ ] After your 16th birthday, apply for vocational rehabilitation services. This usually requires completion of an eye exam, physical exam, and vocational evaluation.
- [ ] Meet with your vocational rehabilitation counselor to discuss your college plans. Include relevant goals in your annual IEP.
- [ ] Talk with your teachers and your guidance counselor and learn how to order textbooks. Assist in this process.
- [ ] Enroll in a summer enrichment program.
- [ ] Learn how to use the library and obtain materials to prepare a research paper.
- [ ] Become familiar with resources on the Internet.

# Eleventh GRADE

## SEPTEMBER

- Contact student support services at specific colleges and ask about services they provide to students with disabilities. If you initiated contact in the tenth grade, this may be a follow-up call.
- Meet with the guidance counselor to review courses of study and to plan for your senior year. Continue to study hard.
- Continue involvement in extracurricular activities.
- Consider running for an office in a club or in student government.
- Take a part-time job or perform volunteer work.

## OCTOBER

- Register to take standardized admission tests.
- Continue to investigate possible careers by participating in job fairs, career days, and field trips.
- Arrange regular times to meet with your vocational rehabilitation counselor.

## NOVEMBER

- Continue to review college catalogs and other student recruiting materials from the colleges you are considering. Develop a list of questions to ask college admissions officers.
- Determine the support services you will need and identify schools which provide them.

- Contact admissions, financial aid, housing, and student support services for necessary assistance in the application process.

DECEMBER

- Review special testing needs with your guidance counselor.
- Learn word processing and computer access skills.

FEBRUARY

- Discuss with your parents or guardians the costs of attending college.
- Regularly contribute to a college savings fund.

MARCH

- Finalize your list of colleges to research further and to visit.
- Finalize arrangements for special testing and/or sign up for regular standardized tests.

APRIL

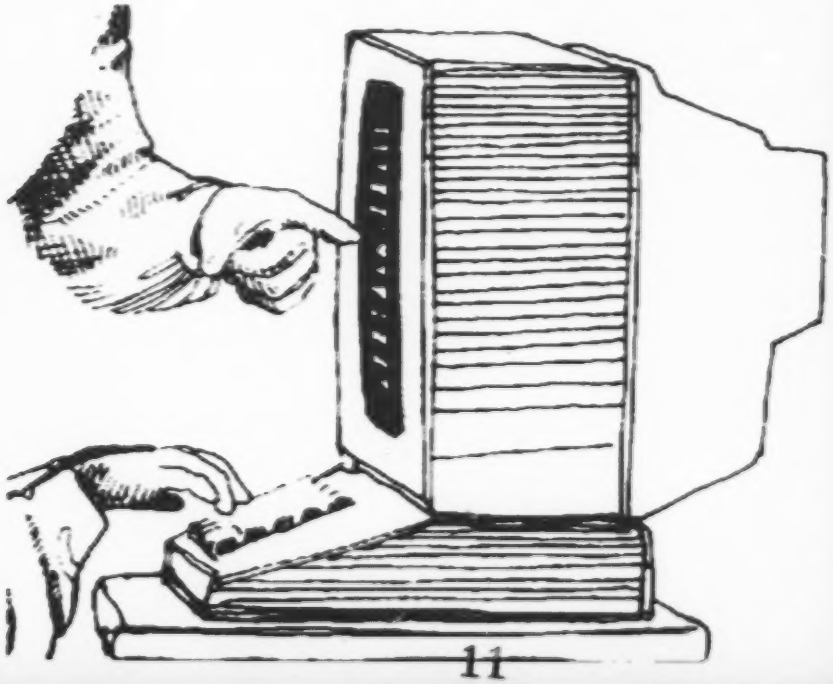
- Obtain college application forms and inquire about application procedures, time frames, financial aid, etc.
- Call and arrange to visit specific colleges.
- Sign up for tests for college credit, often called CLEP tests, in areas which you have special strengths.
- Meet with teachers and order your own books for the twelfth grade from Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic and the American Printing House for the Blind.

May

- Continue to read, interview people, and use computer searches and other information sources to learn about specific colleges.

- Enroll in a summer enrichment program or register for tutoring.
- Investigate possible scholarship opportunities by contacting college financial aid offices and your guidance counselor. Possible sources include state chapters of the American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind, corporations, labor unions, professional associations, religious organizations, and credit unions.

- Enroll in summer college preparatory classes.
- Continue training in word processing and computer access devices.
- Complete interest inventory, vocational evaluation, and independent living evaluation. Review the results with your vocational rehabilitation counselor.



# Twelfth GRADE

- Reduce your list of possible colleges.
- Obtain necessary letters of recommendation from your teachers. Provide these teachers with addressed and stamped envelopes, and thank them for their extra help.
- Create a checklist of application deadlines and stick to it. Deadlines are not waived for people with disabilities.
- Make your college choice as early as possible to allow time to register for classes, consult with college professors, and order textbooks.
- Register for standardized tests and arrange to have your scores sent to selected colleges.
- Meet with your vocational rehabilitation counselor to review community support services available to you while in college and to obtain information about state and national organizations. Review services available through vocational rehabilitation services and develop an individualized written rehabilitation plan (IWRP).
- Regularly contribute to a college savings fund.

- Write necessary application essays; consult with your English teacher as needed.
- Meet with visiting college representatives and inquire about financial aid and scholarships.
- Register for scholarships, including financial assistance for students with visual disabilities.
- If you are male, you must register for the draft through the Selective Service when you turn 18.

NOVEMBER

- File early financial aid forms for funding from nonfederal sources.
- Complete college interviews and visits to college campuses.
- Consult with your O&M instructor about the advisability of a dog guide or electronic travel aid, if you are interested.

DECEMBER

- Complete federal financial aid applications to be mailed when your family's tax information is complete.
- Submit all applications with a January 1 deadline.
- Send your standardized test scores to colleges.
- If you are interested in a dog guide, obtain application forms from the appropriate schools and schedule an O&M evaluation.

JANUARY

- Finalize and mail federal financial aid applications as soon as your parent's or guardian's tax return is completed.
- Recheck senior courses and credits needed for graduation.
- Arrange to have mid-year reports sent to colleges, if necessary.
- Schedule low vision evaluations for now and October. Your vision may fluctuate with the strain of additional reading assignments.
- Apply for dog guide school, if appropriate.

- Investigate transportation options, both for getting to and from campus, and for getting around on campus.

## MARCH

- Rank colleges once acceptances begin to arrive.
- Revisit your top college choices and review their available resources.
- Inquire at these colleges about financial aid and scholarships, including assistance available from corporations, labor unions, professional associations, religious organizations, and credit unions.
- Make your college selection as early as possible.
- Arrange for an O&M session at college. Become familiar with routes when other students and distractions are present.
- Pay all deposits, complete all forms, and submit housing applications.
- Notify your vocational rehabilitation counselor about your decision. Keep your counselor informed of dates, budgets, and college requirements. Complete the required vocational rehabilitation forms.
- Contact the college office of student support services to discuss your specific needs. If possible, obtain recommendations of classes to take.
- Register for fall classes during early registration.
- Contact college professors and discuss your accommodation needs. Obtain textbook lists, including correct edition number, for the fall semester.
- Place Braille or tape orders for fall semester, especially for math and science texts.

- Fight "Senioritis." Your final grades do count.
- Meet all health and immunization requirements for college.
- Apply for reduced fare cards for transportation systems in and around campus.
- Order taped books from Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFBD) in order to receive them by the fall semester. Provide RFBD with your home and college mailing addresses. If necessary, obtain two copies of the textbooks from the college bookstore and submit to RFBD for taping. Contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor about payment prior to ordering texts.

- Assess personal finances and plan how to pay for college. Investigate purchasing a computer system.
- Notify your guidance counselor to send final grades to your college.
- Enjoy your high school graduation.

- Enroll in a college preparatory program which places you in one or more actual college classes.
- Participate in orientation classes for new students and parents.
- Visit campus housing and determine its suitability for your equipment storage needs and O&M needs.
- Become familiar with access technology available on campus.

- Make transportation arrangements and become familiar with campus.
- Advertise for readers and note-takers and begin interviews.
- If using a dog guide, visit the college as early as possible.

JULY

- Obtain school supplies, clothes, living supplies, etc.
- Contact your roommate.
- Practice independent living skills and O&M skills.
- Re-contact professors and verify textbooks.

## Other Information to Help Prepare for COLLEGE

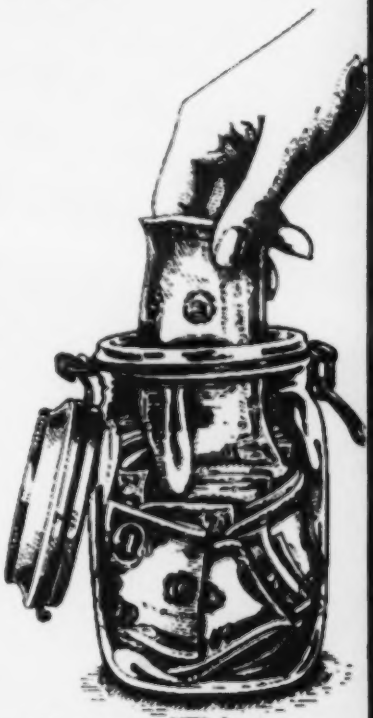
In the research study conducted by McBroom, Sikka, and Jones (1994), college students with visual impairments were presented a list of 25 problems and asked if they had experienced any of them while in college. The most serious problems encountered by students were:

- managing their time;
- accessing diagrams, charts, books, and other written materials;
- having enough money;
- handling difficult classes or assignments; and
- arranging for transportation.

Other problem areas were experienced by less than half of the students and they included:

- finding their way around campus,
- participating in recreational or athletic activities,
- taking exams with time limits,
- accessing computers,
- obtaining disability support services, and
- dealing with professors.

Other problem areas included:



- social pressures,
- receiving financial aid,
- loneliness,
- finding and scheduling readers,
- making good grades,
- writing papers,
- making friends,
- being accepted,
- getting along with a roommate,
- registering for classes,
- locating suitable housing,
- living independently, and
- managing money.

In the same study, college students with visual impairments also were asked how important a series of items were in their college preparation. The most important areas identified by students were:

- preregistering for classes,
- communicating with professors,
- applying for financial aid,
- learning how to manage money,

- locating transportation,
- deciding on a college to attend,
- receiving campus O&M instruction,
- ordering textbooks early,
- making housing arrangements, and
- communicating with student support services.

Less problematic areas identified in this study included visiting college during orientation, working with vocational rehabilitation services, finding and scheduling readers, deciding on a major area of study, meeting or talking with a roommate, and attending a college preparatory program.

Additional information on transition to college can be obtained from the following sources:

**Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)**
P.O. Box 21192
Columbus, OH 43221-0192
(614) 488-4972

**American Council of the Blind**
1155 15th Street, NW, Suite 720
Washington, DC 20005
(800) 424-8666 or (202) 467-5081

**American Foundation for the Blind**
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300
New York, NY 10001
(212) 502-7600

**Hadley School for the Blind**
700 Elm Street
Winnetka, IL 60093
(708) 446-8111

**HEATH Resource Center**
National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities
One Dupont Circle, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036-1193
(800) 544-3284 or (202) 939-9320

**National Federation of the Blind**
1800 Johnson Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
(410) 659-9314

Printed materials also are available. The following are three recommended readings:

**Eisner, E., & Tikoff, V. K.** (1994). Preparing your child for college: A resource book for parents. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

**Faculty and Staff of the Hadley School for the Blind (Speaker).** (1992). The American University: Planning for success, Part One: Preparation starts early [Cassette recording and printed study guide]. Winnetka, IL: Hadley School for the Blind.

**McBroom, L. W., Sikka, A., & Jones, L. B.** (1994). The transition to college for students with visual impairments (Technical report). Mississippi State, MS: Mississippi State University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision.

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This publication is also available in alternate media upon request.

For additional copies contact:

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